



Edinburgh University Swing Dance
Society notes on:



Balboa: 2) transition step and crosses

NB – These notes are copyright. You are free to copy and distribute them intact, but please do not remove the EUSDS header or our contact details. Send requests for the newest edition to balboa@swingdoctors.org.uk.
Jamie & Katie.

The transition step

The transition step is an important foundation of Bal-swing, because it is a useful way of moving between 'pure' Balboa and bal-swing. Indeed, some teachers insist that it is the only way one should ever make the change, although this is nowadays a minority view and most people are content to go from the basic straight into bal-swing figures such as the come-around.

The key point about the transition step is that it separates the two partners so that they are no longer in the close hold. It uses 'break time' (step step down-hold, step step down-hold);

Leaders:

- 1 step back on left as usual
- 2 close right to be by the left as usual
- 3 step forwards on to your left foot, leading with the body not the foot itself, and placing your left foot so that its heel is by the toes of the R one and it points diagonally forwards and to the left. At this moment, your weight is definitely still going forward "through" your partner – this is important.
- 4 hold, but as your partner's centre starts to move back in response to yours coming forward, you 'spring' off her (gently) and off your stationary L foot, so that your centre is now moving backwards. You are therefore parting company at the chest.
- 5 step back on R
- 6 close L to it.
- 7 – step forward on R, closing up to your partner again (this part is often modified, depending what you are "transitioning into").
- 8 – hold.

Followers: you just obey your usual rules (see sheet 1).

Problems with and tips for the transition step.

- If you tread on the lady on 3, you are violating the 'only step underneath you' rule. You need to lead forwards with your 'centre', not with your foot.
- Some leaders exaggerate the chest lead by doing an impersonation of the Incredible Hulk trying to burst out of his shirt. You are not doing anything particular with your chest – it is simply the connection with the centre of your weight. It is the weight change that is important.
- You need to relax your R arm (leaders) and L (followers) enough to separate a bit, but do not lose the frame altogether.
- The move looks nicer if you hold each other's gaze as you do the cross-overs – your bodies will be facing past each other and it gives the dance a very romantic and look if your eyes refuse to part as your bodies do.
- You need to keep a good frame; this is especially so of the lady's left arm (ballroom people will be used to this, Lindy Hoppers less so)

Cross-overs

- On the 7 of a transition step, you can turn your body 45 degrees or so to your left and lead your partner to do the same, so that you are now each facing past the other's right shoulder. When the leader puts his R foot down, he will feel that he is 'crossing it over' his left (although he is in reality just putting it down underneath his now-rotated body). The follower will feel that she is opening out (rather than crossing) as this happens.
- Hold for 8.
- On 1,2, do another 'back, close' (leaders LR, followers RL) and turn the other way, so that you are now both facing past the other's left side.
- On 3 – put your free foot down – again the leader will feel he is crossing and the follower will feel that she is opening.
- On 5-6, do another 'back close' (leaders RL, followers LR), and repeat from the top of this section.

To exit: on the 1-2 back-close, which separates you, face each other. You can then either close up with a hold on 3 and you are straight back into the basic or, for more elegance, go straight into a come-around (which will be covered in sheet 3 of these notes).

Problems with and tips for the crossover

- This is a gentle, smooth move, **not** 'step step – STOMP, step step STOMP'. Be light and keep the feeling of rotation going through out the move, rather than using a rapid rotation and then a straight stomp.
- If the crossovers go wobbly and unsmooth, is it often because one or both of the partners are reaching forwards with their leg on the cross-over: the step-only-underneath-you rule still applies.
- If you are making an exit directly to basic, the man has to close to the lady not the other way round (because you need her to be going backwards after your hold on 3 in the basic – if you pull her towards you on the 1-3, everything will be going completely the wrong way and it will look and feel ugly. Hopefully, you are close enough to each other that the coming together involves only a subtle change.
- If the basic feels terrible afterwards, you have probable 'forgotten' the hold and have come together facing rather than with the slight 'v'.
- The leader's left arm should not be doing much – dance without this connection to make sure. The move does not work as well if it is achieved by the man pushing and pulling madly with that hand.

Swing Dance Society

To make suggestions or to request up-to-date copies, e-mail Balboa@swingdoctors.org.uk

Date of last revision: 15th November 2004